



## The Federal Electronics Challenge and Environmental Management Systems: What's the Connection?

---

### What Is an EMS?

An environmental management system (EMS) is the part of an organization's overall management system that integrates environmental concerns and issues into the organization's management processes. An EMS helps organizations avoid environmental problems by increasing awareness and developing sustainable activities and processes.

EMSs help federal organizations and facilities identify and reduce risk, achieve compliance with regulations, and respond to environmental performance goals. In addition, EMSs enhance budgetary planning and overall performance by integrating management of environmental issues into organization management through a formal process of planning, performance measurement, and review.

### Why Is EMS Implementation Important to Federal Agencies?

Because of its size, geographic distribution, and range of activities, the federal government has the potential to significantly impact the environment. A well-implemented EMS helps manage that impact. An EMS improves regulatory compliance and environmental performance, increases overall efficiency and accountability, reduces operational costs and potential liability, and enhances employee morale and community relations.

The federal government formally committed to environmental stewardship through Executive Order (E.O.) 13148, *Greening the Government through Leadership in Environmental Management*. Section 401(b) of E.O. 13148 states that: "By December 31, 2005, each agency shall implement an environmental management system at all appropriate agency facilities ..."

### What Are Federal Facilities Required To Do?

Each appropriate federal facility will implement a process to identify and achieve goals, monitor progress towards those goals, and strive for overall continual improvement in environmental management. This process should include the following:

- Identifying a facility's activities and associated unique environmental impacts.
- Establishing objectives and targets to reduce or eliminate those impacts.
- Developing environmental management programs that monitor progress and establish roles and responsibilities for achieving the objectives.
- Responding to progress and addressing any shortfalls that may arise.
- Reviewing status of the EMS and ensuring improvement in the overall environmental program.

### What Is the Connection Between the Federal Electronics Challenge and an EMS?

The goal of an EMS is for an organization to achieve and demonstrate sound environmental performance by addressing the impact of their activities on the environment. The overall FEC Program goal for partners is to reduce life-cycle environmental impacts of electronic products. An EMS provides the structure and framework to achieve that goal. The FEC and associated tools and guidance will help federal facilities achieve environmental improvements from better management of electronic equipment throughout its life cycle at the facility.

### How Can Participation in the FEC Program Support Your EMS?

The FEC can provide helpful tools and assistance to "populate" the elements of an EMS.

- Identify types of federal facility activities associated with electronics purchase, use, and disposition.
- Meet EMS objectives through specific step-by-step activities.
- Identify roles and responsibilities by building a knowledgeable team.
- Provide access to other federal agencies experiences.

- Develop goals and measure progress by outlining ways to measure progress, helping establish baselines, and providing recognition for improvement.

### **Why Should Management of Electronic Equipment Be a Main Part of a Federal Facility EMS?**

Most federal facilities have general office space and commonly use electronic equipment such as computers, printers, and copiers. When a facility investigates how its operations impact the environment, it may find that the adverse environmental impacts associated with electronic equipment use, such as energy consumption and solid and hazardous waste generation, are substantial and can be targeted for reduction. Purchasing environmentally and energy-efficient equipment and managing and disposing of it in an environmentally sound way can help a facility reach EMS targets.

### **What Tools Are Available from the FEC?**

There are many tools available from the FEC program; many are downloadable from the FEC Web site:

<http://www.federalelectronicchallenge.net/tools.htm>

- If you are trying to purchase “greener” electronics, this tool might help: FEC Guidance for Procurement of Environmentally Preferable Products  
<http://www.federalelectronicchallenge.net/tools/procure.pdf>
- If you are trying to decrease energy use impacts from electronics at your facility, this tool might help: Energy Conservation with ENERGY STAR®  
<http://www.federalelectronicchallenge.net/tools/estar.pdf>
- If you are trying to select an environmentally sound recycling service provider, this tool might help: Checklist for Selection of Electronics Recycling Services  
<http://www.federalelectronicchallenge.net/tools/select.pdf>

In addition, a crosswalk of FEC issues and EMS elements can be found at the FEC Web site:

[http://www.federalelectronicchallenge.net/tools/ems\\_tools.pdf](http://www.federalelectronicchallenge.net/tools/ems_tools.pdf)